

The Messenger

"Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!"

2 Corinthians 9:15

Christ Church Barnstaple
Methodist & United Reformed Church

Dec 23 - Jan 24



**Rededication of our Church
Friends on 29th October**



**Icing gingerbread figures at Half Term
Hobnob**



Fun at the Winter Fair

December Diary

Sun	3rd	10.30am 3pm	Morning Worship and Holy Communion: Revd Don Causeway Christmas Service
Mon	4th	2.30pm	Friendship Group
Thu	7th	7pm	Barnstaple Community Choir & Orchestra Concert
Sun	10th	10.30am 4.30pm	Morning Worship: Revd Marilyn Café Church
Mon	11th	10am	Sound it Out
Sun	17th	10.30am 6.30pm	Family Service: Revd Don Christ Church Carol Service
Sun	24th	10.30am 4.30pm	Morning Worship: Revd Don Christingle
Mon	25th	10.30am	Christmas Day Family Service: Revd Don
Sun	31st	10.30am 4pm	United Service at Christ Church: Revd Don. Followed by a Bring and Share Lunch New Years Eve Party

January Diary

Sat	6th	3pm	Circuit Farewell Service <u>at Sticklepath Methodist Church</u> (see page 7)
Sun	7th	10.30am 3pm	Morning Worship, Covenant Service and Holy Communion Causeway New Year Service
Mon	8th	10am 2.30pm	Sound it Out Friendship Group
Sun	14th	10.30am 4.30pm	Morning Worship Café Church
Wed	17th	10am	<i>Deadline for February Messenger</i>
Sun	21st	10.30am	Morning Worship
Mon	22nd	10am 2.30pm	Sound it Out Friendship Group
Sun	28th	10.30am	Morning Worship

Regular meetings :

- Tuesdays - Rainbows 5.30pm (Term-time only)
- Wednesdays - Parents & Toddlers 9.30am (Term-time only)
- Thursdays - Circuit Zoom Service 7pm
- Fridays - Hobnob 10am (except Bank Holidays)

We were so sad to hear the news that Gordon had died. We assure Pam and all the family of our love and prayers at this time. Gordon was a faithful member and great friend, and will be very much missed.



Message from Revd Don

Dear friends,

Just over ten years ago Eddy and I moved from one of the hottest, driest parts of Britain and arrived here in Barnstaple. The weather was grim and it rained every day for the first six months, making me feel as though we were now living at the bottom of a pond. Thankfully while the weather was cold and wet, the welcome we received was wonderfully warm and we quickly felt part of a very caring church family which was committed to following Christ where he would lead.

As your minister I have been blessed in so many ways not just by the church family here at Christ Church but also at Sticklepath and Challacombe Methodist Churches, and Muddiford United Reformed Church. There has also been the new experience for me as a United Reformed minister in working so closely within the wider church family of the Methodist Circuit.

It has been ten years of joys and sorrows, of celebrations and heart breaks, of feeling lost at times and knowing God's clear leading at others. In short, it has been ten years in a life's journey of seeking to follow Christ where he will lead. The greatest joy has been in travelling that journey together with you as we have worshipped and worked and witnessed together to the presence of Christ in our lives.

I am eternally grateful for all the blessings we have all shared. The friendships formed in our shared relationship with God through Christ. I am eternally sorry for the ways in which I have failed some of you and if you are one of those I have failed please forgive me.

I have always cared deeply for others who are in pain and know that since Covid and after twenty-seven years in fulltime ministry the time is right for me to retire. Working within the Methodist Church has taught me a lot, most of it very positive, including the wonderfully descriptive expression of "sitting down" used for retiring ministers. At the beginning of next year I will be ready to step down from the pulpit and to sit down. However, after speaking with others who have sat down and also from what I have seen of so many of you who are retired I'm pretty sure I won't sit down for long... at least not if Eddy has anything to do with it!

You will always be in my heart, mind and prayers, especially in the coming weeks, months and years as you continue to follow Christ where he will lead you as individuals, church, circuit, synod and district.

These are challenging, changing times for the Church and the world but you are blessed with one another, with an Eldership that is faithful and committed, Church Friends who are caring and supportive, and so many who do so much and give so much in so many ways in the life of the church. Please keep one another in prayer and together build your living relationship with Christ, dare to dream and always seek his will in everything.

With thanks, love and prayers,
Your friend,



Prayers for December

3rd December

Eternal, faithful, mighty God, your potter's wheel spins and we are formed by your loving hands. We are fired in the awesome heat of your radiant glory, glazed with the rich grace of your Son, and filled with the power of your Holy Spirit. Eternal, God, you are the potter, we are the clay. We are fired and ready for use, as we wait for the glory that is yet to come. Amen.

10th December

Lord, when we feel far from you,
help us to see the whole picture.
When we struggle to see your hand in our lives,
help us to see the whole picture.
When we are stuck and need to move forwards,
help us to see the whole picture.
When we can't see anything except the situation right in front of us,
help us to see the whole picture. Amen.

17th December

We pray today for all who are downtrodden, all who are oppressed, all who know the heavy hand of marginalisation on them. God, we turn to you, remembering the words of Mary, praying that you will lift up the lowly, you will raise the voice of justice, and you will scatter oppression. May all who are oppressed be set free. We ask this, in joy and gratitude. Amen.

24th December

Father, how can we thank you enough for your Christmas gift to us?
We give thanks as labour pains intensify, heralding Jesus' birth,
the empty cradle soon to be filled and overflowing with love –
a love that touches, convicts, renews and blesses.
We thank you for the joy that fills us as we wait with baited breath to celebrate our Saviour.
We give thanks for your loving glory which comes down
this Christmas time. Amen.

31st December

Jesus, you came and you conquered. You were born into the world,
recognised by some but denied by many. You grew in wisdom, at
one with the Father, your life impacting the world then and now.
Journeying to the cross, you left footprints for generations to follow –
footprints of love, healing and joy. Thank you that as we journey into a new year
with hearts open to you, we carry with us your joy and light. As we walk forward
together may we be able to say, 'I see and hear your wisdom.' We walk with you,
Lord, thanking and praising your holiness. Amen.

Prayers for January

7th January

All powerful God, you shake us out of complacency,
you remind us of the meaning of service,
you restore our relationship with you and others,
you empower us with your spirit and bless us with your grace,
you speak your words of reassurance over us.
Thank you for each new day, each new beginning,
and each touch of your grace in our lives. Amen.

14th January

Speak to us, Lord: help us to hear.
Show us your glory, Lord: help us to see.
May we taste and sense your presence, Lord: help us to feel.
In our time, and in your time, Lord,
lead us where you want us to go,
and show us what you want us to know. Amen.

21st January

Faithful God, with Andrew, Peter, James and John, we praise you Father, Spirit, Son; with Jonah who you called and sent to people who could then repent, we'll do what you would have us do and speak of all that's good and true. We'll start today, we'll start right now, and trust you'll show us where and how. Amen.

28th January

Living God, we praise you for the people you have called to speak your words of power to us and to our world – words of life and death, of opportunity and risk, of comfort and challenge, of wisdom and clarity. Help us to step out to the rhythm of their beat, the beat of justice, of compassion, of reverence for you, so that we might grow in wisdom and confidence, and sing our life's story to the music of your gospel. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Good news about a new Superintendent minister

Dear Friends.

I am pleased to announce to the circuit the good news that we were matched in stationing with the Rev Tracey Darling. She visited the circuit with her husband Paul earlier in the week. We invited her unanimously to become the superintendent of our circuit from the first of September 2024. She accepted the invitation and we look forward to welcoming her next year. Please continue to pray for the circuit and for Tracey and Paul. We praise God for His answers to our prayers. We give Him all the glory and honour.

God Bless You All,

Stephen

Christ Church Christmas Cards

We all love sending cards to our friends in the church family. We usually have a way to minimize both the expense and the environmental impact, whilst raising funds for a local charity - and we're trying something new this year.

If you wish to, please choose one (smallish) card and write it to "all at Christ Church" with your message. Bring it to church on any Sunday (or leave it under the tree).

We will hang them on the Christmas tree in the vestibule.

If you are able, please add your contribution for **Action for Children** to the collection box provided.

I'm sure it will look lovely! Thank you,



Liz

Christmas Services at Christ Church

Sun 3rd at 3pm: Causeway Christmas Service

Sun 17th at 6.30pm: Carol Service

Sun 24th at 4.30pm: Christingle



Mon 25th at 10.30am:
Christmas Day Family Service



Report from Synod meeting on 21 October 2023

I attended the 102nd meeting of Synod in Bridgwater with Revd Don Macalister and Alison Cairns. Rev Neil Thorogood led the opening devotions with a reflection on Mark 6 v 30-44. Essentially, he likened churches to the disciples who, when asked about food for the great crowd of people, said "we haven't got enough". But Jesus tells them to see what they have got (5 loaves and 2 fishes) and he uses that. Whatever we have to offer is enough – God can work with that. This fitted in well with the main theme of the meeting which was to offer a chance to attend some workshops on offer from different churches. Representatives from Muddiford URC offered one on setting up and running a hybrid church (online and in person at the same time). I didn't attend that as I preach there from time to time and I know that, as a I preach, I am being "streamed" out to people watching on Zoom and it is a great success. I attended one very inspiring workshop on creating and curating art exhibitions using exhibits that are available (for free!) from Westhill Endowment charity (take a look at www.westhillendowment.org). The other one that I attended, which also impressed Alison, was about resources that we might use in church: * firstly, small cards that can be taken away and which offer short prayers on a number of difficult issues, like grief, and which are offered by www.explorechristianity.info. The other resources were the Bible Society's "Bible course" and the "Living the Questions" course about faith. These had all been used successfully by Trinity-Henleaze URC.

The rest of the meeting covered the usual business with reports from various committees. We are still without a Moderator and the selection process has not gone according to plan so they are starting again with that. Hopefully we may have a Moderator by this time next year.

Most importantly a resolution was passed calling for peace in Israel and Palestine. I read this out in Church the next day and it has been displayed in the vestibule. It was agreed to send that to every MP in the Synod area and the Prime Minister. This had particular resonance for me as we had been due to go on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land just three days after the violent attack by Hamas on 7 October. We were relieved that our trip was cancelled and I do not know when we would feel comfortable in trying to visit the Holy Land in the future. It is a very sad situation there.

Paula Littlewood

* We have now purchased a set of these cards in memory of Revd John Bland, they are located in the vestibule

Don and Eddy Macalister

I am sure many of you are already aware that Revd Don Macalister is retiring after many years as a minister of the United Reformed Church. This means that Don and Eddy will be leaving after 10 years of ministry in this circuit. During this time Don has been the minister responsible for Christ Church Barnstaple, Sticklepath Methodist Church and Challacombe Methodist Church and preached and supported other churches as part of working in the Ilfracombe and Barnstaple Methodist Circuit.

We are grateful for all that Don and Eddy have contributed during this time. Don has led many services of worship and supported different church and church activities as well as those across the circuit. We have been blessed by his ministry, his prayers, his concern for us as churches and individuals, his willingness to be involved in so much, often working many hours in support of all of us as a worshipping community. Eddy has been a vital part of the ministry by her care and support of Don and in her involvement with the churches particularly her outstanding contribution to the work with children. She has a real gift and her stories, activities and care have been much appreciated. She will be especially missed by Sunday Club and Café Church.

Sunday 31st December at 10.30am will be their final service at Christ Church Barnstaple. We will be joined by members of Sticklepath Methodist Church and Challacombe Methodist Church. We invite friends to join us for this special service. It will be followed by a "Bring and Share Lunch." To ensure a variety of fare, it would be helpful if you would liaise with Eff about what you will be bringing. We will be making a presentation to Don and Eddy during the service. If anyone would like to contribute to this please contact Alison Cairns or Kathy Jeacock – contact details are at the back of the magazine.

There will be a **Circuit Farewell Service at Sticklepath Methodist Church** in Rhododendron Avenue at 3.00pm on Saturday January 6th. A tea will be provided following the service. To help with planning seating and catering please will you let Alison Cairns know if you are planning to attend by Wednesday January 3rd.



Invitation to a New Year's Eve Family Party

We would like to invite you to a New Year's Eve family party at Christ Church Barnstaple on Sunday 31st December between 4.00pm and 7.30pm.

This will be the first New Years Eve party for a few years and it will be good to meet together for fun, games, quizzes, time to talk with one another and to share food together. A supper including pasties, pies and sausage rolls, including vegetarian and vegan options will be available. No need to book, we just ask for a £3 donation towards the cost of food.



Rainbows



*"Everyone
was
dressed in
their party
finery"*



< Superintendent
Stephen Caddick
decorating his hand
biscuit



^ Sharon Caddick and Alex
enjoying the results



How big is our God?



Hand
Biscuits



**Parents
and Toddlers**

*"The group goes from strength
to strength"*



Young Families Work News

Parents and Toddlers

The group goes from strength to strength. We have a very committed group of families who turn up each week even in this sometimes inclement weather. Many of the children come with grandparents so maybe we should rename? They all seem to enjoy it and join in with the children and are extremely helpful when we clear up. It won't be long before our Christmas break and our last meeting always involves a party, Christmas story and a little gift.

Sandy

Rainbows

October 31st was a special Light Party for our Rainbows. An opportunity to wear a party dress, many sparkly, and enjoy dancing, musical statues, glow sticks and a treasure hunt in the dark (well almost!) The next week was more of a challenge – to make a marble run with play dough on a tray and try it out – yes, we do have some budding engineers. Then, in contrast, kind words and pictures were put on cut-out coloured hands to make a kindness rainbow which can be seen in the Alan Finch room.

We also had a visit from our commissioner, Maureen, who came to present Hannah, our leader, with a five-year service badge. Hannah has been with us for longer than that, but time as a “young leader” isn't counted. The Rainbows are getting quite good at eating fruit, be it as kebabs, rainbow fruit pots or pictures made from fruit. They're still happy when the snack is just a biscuit and drink. All of our activities contribute towards badges, but as each has several clauses to be completed, it takes a while to finish a badge syllabus. We concentrate more on enjoying ourselves and encouraging friendships, kindness, respect, co-operation and generally growing up as lovely helpful people. However, a few badges have been awarded to those who have managed to be with us often enough to tick the required boxes. The recent ones include storyteller, communicate, feel good, network, camp and express myself. As some Rainbows haven't been with us for long, or have missed doing some of the activities, they were all given a Rainbow fun badge.

Eff

Rainbow Rescue

Everyone was dressed in their party finery ready for the first Rainbows after Autumn Half Term. Unfortunately the traffic in town was grid locked so those coming along by car or bus were at a standstill. Under our umbrellas, we took shelter from that evening's rain at the Silver Cod. The ever resourceful leaders showed Rainbows how to be cheerful when things don't go as planned. They had us playing a lively game of “guess the next colour” until we could get into church. Within a minute of the door opening, the fun began. Thank you very much to Hannah, Nicola and Eff – the 'Light Party' was great.

Bella and Grandma Maureen

Sunday Club

Thank you to the children and their families who supported our November 'specials' – Remembrance weekend and the Winter Fair. We have plenty of activities for Advent including making decorations for the Childrens' window. Sunday Club will also be meeting during the Christmas holidays. The leaders will be meeting to plan the programme for the first quarter of 2024.

Café Church

We were very happy to welcome our Circuit Superintendent Stephen Caddick and his wife Sharon to our Café Church. It was lovely to see them making themselves at home, chatting to people and joining in all the activities with great enthusiasm.

(cont.)

Our theme for the afternoon in fact – How great is our God – was inspired by Stephen’s suggestion to use it to start the Tuesday Rise Prayer Initiative which he is leading. It also offered some good songs for us to sing! These included ‘He’s got the Whole World in his Hands’ which immediately in our planning led us on to focus on hands for some of our activities! After they arrived, the children soon became absorbed in the food craft activity (what’s new?!) icing hand biscuits and then moving on to decorate hand outlines with jewel stickers and Henna type decorations. These then were taken by the children into the worship, led by Eff. She began by presenting each child with a ball or sphere-like shape, easy to hold in their hand. The sphere sizes then grew – larger ones being introduced – ever growing – a football, a globe, then a slightly larger globe until there was a large world that Eff held (photo - page 8)– not so easy to hold in a hand! But then the children encountered an even larger one as they were invited into the Alan Finch Room where of course there was more - that wonderful mural with the seemingly impossible concept of our world – even bigger - being held in a pair of hands – God’s Hands – an amazing illustration of the Greatness of God – He has indeed ‘...Got the Whole world in his Hands’. Other songs enjoyed during the worship time were How Great thou Art and My God is a great big God, with illustrations on screen – courtesy of Don - large mountains, wide oceans, and skyscrapers. Apart from the word searches and colouring there was an anagram list to remind us of words to describe God: mwsaeoe, gaizman, ivdnei, eomoniptnt - such big words, but even worked out and understood by little people!

The afternoon was truly buzzing with excited activity and chatting. At half past four it had seemed that few people were coming but suddenly, like a wave, more families almost flooded through the doors(!). The church then soon became a busy hub filled with fun and joy and laughter – made even better as always by the scrumptious tea!

Come and join us for our Christmas Café Church on December 10th at 4.30pm. You will always be welcome.

And now to finish A GREAT BIG THANK YOU!

As always, we would like to thank you all for your love, prayers and support in the different ways you have given us over the past year. But we cannot leave 2023 without a HUGE thank you. Sadly we are having to bid farewell to Don and Eddy, both of whom have been immensely supportive and helpful with our work over the years they have been with us. We have been truly blessed to have and know them and to work with them. But to Eddy we owe an even larger debt of gratitude for everything she has done firstly for the children as a creative, imaginative and very gifted and committed teacher and of course, for the team – as a colleague, a friend, a wise counsellor – and an amazing clearer upper(!) – always willing to step into any role at a moment’s notice too!

So, A GREAT BIG THANK YOU TO YOU BOTH. We are ALL GOING TO MISS YOU – whatever age we are, but especially the children – BUT we send you off now with every good wish for the future and with blessings and with much love and our gratitude ringing in your ears! So now we finish our news for this year by sending you all greetings for this most precious and wondrous season.

Very best wishes to you all for a very happy and peaceful Christmas. With special Christmas love and blessings,

The Young Families Work Team.

Half-term Hobnob

Hobnob in half term week was somewhat livelier than usual. Activities were provided for children, and families from nearby were encouraged to join us. Meeting up with their young friends to decorate gingerbread people (thank you Jennifer and Kirsty!), do leaf rubbings with wax crayons, pictures to colour in, and play with some of our toys kept the youngsters happy while the parents enjoyed their coffee, cake, and chat time. A happy morning!

It was good to welcome the families to Hobnob – but there was also a Youth Club reunion that day, when Norman, Geoff and Tony (some of the 'older generation') welcomed visitors June (daughter of Rev. Arthur Bird) and Margaret Smith, and shared memories of the church Youth Club in the 50s and 60s.

(photos - pages 1 & 13)

Eff and Marilyn

A message from Christian Aid (in response to the collection at Christ Church for the Middle East Crisis)

Thank you for your donation of £138.50 to our Middle East Crisis Appeal. Your thoughtful gift will help our established partners across the region deliver vital emergency supplies such as medical relief, food, and shelter, to vulnerable

families affected by this terrible crisis. It will also help us advocate for a just and lasting peace in this area. Every prayer, every gift, and every action brings hope to people hit by disaster. By giving to our emergency response today, you are joining a community of people supporting those most vulnerable. We are incredibly grateful for your support, especially during the difficult economic time we are facing here in the UK. Your continued generosity means so much to the communities impacted by this crisis.



Christian Aid's Prayer for Advent and Christmas 2023

This Christmas Christian Aid is shining a light on a group of gifted young women in one of the poorest, most disaster-prone areas of Bangladesh.

Dear Jesus, you are the light that shines in the darkness, and the darkness has no power to overcome it. Today, we lift to you women and girls in Bangladesh with incredible talent, determination, and potential.

Economic barriers hinder their access to education. Injustice holds them back from pursuing their goals.

We pray for the women and girls of Bangladesh. We pray for their emotional and mental well-being. May they be surrounded with a support system that encourages and uplifts them. May they have mentors and role models who will inspire and guide them.

We pray that the wounds caused by discrimination and inequality would be healed.

Fill the hearts of those who face exclusion with confidence and self-belief. Let their lights shine brightly, inspiring others and igniting movements for change.

In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

(Written by the Reverend Suchitra Behera, Church of Bangladesh.)

Your continuing generosity and support are much appreciated.

Janet & Paula

Causeway - Sharing our Talents

This month's Causeway service on November 5th was very special as we shared the talents and gifts which God has given us with each other. Michaela welcomed and thanked everyone for taking part. After singing together Marilyn introduced several people who shared their special talents with us.

Firstly, David explained how he had spent many hours skillfully building a Meccano model of a Braddick's chalet without the aid of a plan or instruction. Then Carol showed us pictures of Peppa Pig which she had carefully coloured in, whilst June showed us examples of the attractive birthday cards she makes. Sharon showed us some of her Godzilla pictures and explained that the film is coming to the cinemas in the UK soon. Carolyn showed us her folder of dancing certificates, and Tracey said her memory book was a record of how she had "slimmed down" in recent years!

We were then treated to an amazing performance by John Ewington "playing the spoons" to the tune of *He who would valiant be*. This was followed by a joyful time of Jenny and Joy tap dancing, Sarah and MarcheLe singing karaoke, and Mark singing a well-known Elton John song. The Bible reading: Matt.5 v 14-16 was expertly read by Carolyn (Ousley) and Alison summed up the afternoon, thanking our Father God for each of our special talents, and praying that as we rejoice in and enjoy our gifts, we should also share them with others. By so doing, we would be sharing the Light of the World, Jesus, with others, even if this was simply a smile or a kind word. Everyone enjoyed this memorable service.

Wishing you all every blessing at Christmas and looking forward to seeing you on Dec 3rd at 3pm for our Christmas Causeway and then on Jan 7th 2024 for our New Year Causeway Worship.

The Causeway team

Friendship Group

On 23 October we had a return visit by Peter Christie. Last year he talked to us about how Bideford was first with so many things. This year he moved on to Barnstaple focusing on old Barnstaple. Again, we all enjoyed hearing this.

On the 13 November we had a return visit from Emma from Mrs. Smudgers Kitchen. She beautifully decorated a Christmas Cake and gave lots of tips as to where we could purchase some of the equipment. The finished cake was given to the Christmas Winter Fair for a 'guess the weight' competition. We were all sad to learn that this would be Emma's last demonstration as sadly she has become allergic to flour. We wished her all the best as she will be working in Exeter with the Police Force. We will really miss her as she's demonstrated to our group over many years.

Dates for our next meetings:

Dec 4 - Christmas Flowers

Jan 8 - Bring & Share Tea

Jan 22 - RNLI Talk and Film

As this will be my last message this year, I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and good health in the New Year.

Rosemary

Causeway



< Sharon with her Godzilla pictures



Marilyn introduced several people who spoke about their special talents



Friendship Group



Emma, showing the finished Cake, and at the Winter Fair



Half Term Hobnob

Everyone is always welcome.
Fridays at 10am



Youth Club Reunion

Kira Farm and Amigos

Kira Farm has enjoyed a number of visits in the last two or three months including one from our local Park School. The group flew over to Uganda in October. We hear that they had an incredible time, immersing themselves in the culture, finding out what the daily routine was like on the Farm and sharing in the trainees' work. They also of course enjoyed a game or two of football with them! They will have arrived home with many memories that they'll cherish for a lifetime, and that will have an impact on the rest of their lives. Another visit to Kira Farm is now taking place from the Strength and Inspire Team that visit at this time each year. They are there to uplift and empower the trainees before they leave and to bring love, hope and restoration. The team works with the trainees to equip them to pass on all they have learnt over the year to their communities and congregations and to put it into practice. All this is done with the ultimate goal of lifting the trainees, their families and their communities out of poverty when they return home.

And from Amigos we hear the good news that this year's boreholes are being completed and there are now six that are already functioning. In the villages where they are functioning the people no longer have to spend 3-4 hours each day fetching clean drinking water. The women can now instead focus their time on their small businesses and contribute financially towards the household's needs. The boreholes have also brought hope and opportunities for the children. Attendance at school is better. The children, no longer burdened with water fetching duties, can now focus on their studies. They can aspire to a brighter future. The water brings smiles to everyone in the villages. It is indeed life changing!

Anthea

Excerpts from Rachel Greenland's recent newsletters

Freetown Update October 2023

2 months completed. As October draws to a close, it doesn't feel very autumn like! Rainy season is supposed to end soon, but it still rains most days. In the hospital we are busy doing maxillofacial, plastic surgery (mostly burns) and general surgery. I have been working in all 3 wards. I was in general surgery for the first time this week. It was my first shift on that ward, and I was in charge! Thankfully they were a great team and we muddled along together! And all survived!

Some of our younger patients have now been in hospital a while, some a few weeks as they wait for their wounds to heal. The daily time on the veranda during the afternoons enables the patients to have outside air and a bit of freedom to play. The kids play on the tricycles (at high speed), the adults play card games, connect 4, Jenga or colouring. Often loud African music accompanies a wild time of dancing and singing. It is a crazy and wonderful time.

Harder stuff: Of course, there is always hard stuff. We have had a couple of situations with people that we could not help. Mostly we are sheltered from this, as the selection



team are good at selecting the patients we can help, so it is not common to have patients who end up being a 'no' to surgery by the time they get to us. Recently we had a 3 month old baby with a cleft lip, who came for her cleft lip to be repaired. Sadly, because she had other health conditions that we can't help, it was too risky to proceed with her cleft lip, so we had to discharge her a few days later without surgery. The Mama had left her village as they had disowned the baby because of the cleft lip, so the mother had bought her here in desperation. We were unsure where she would take her baby back to. Someone on-board had contacts with some Missionaries who live near her village in the interior of Sierra Leone. They have now taken the Mama and her baby into be cared for. The baby is not likely to survive very long, so it is reassuring that the Mama has people around her to take care of her in such a sad situation.

Heart-warming moment: Yesterday I walked past the entrance to the max-fax ward. As I walked past, a patient in his bed shouted out for me to come over. I went over and he said something in French that I couldn't understand. He was very excited about something. Then he kept pointing at me and saying Guinea! I realised he had been a patient back in Guinea 2013! When he had a facial tumour removed. I couldn't believe he remembered me. It was so lovely to see him here. He will be here for a few days as he needs another minor surgery.

November in Freetown

How di bodi? Hope all is well with you all. Time is going fast now and I only have a few weeks left onboard. The wards continue to be full, with patients having maxillofacial, general and reconstructive plastic surgery. I have been working on all 3 wards, and so I have been learning a lot! Maxillofacial is my usual base, but working on the other wards I've learnt is more about play! with the majority of patients being paediatrics. It is fun to be at work, the kids are very resilient and energetic and every shift involves a dance party!!

Off ship: One unexpected experience happened this week, when I tried to find the location where my Mum stayed in Sierra Leone 20 years ago. We were both here on different Mercy Ships projects, me on the ship, Mum working with a land-based team, helping to restore an orphanage for kids who were disabled following polio. There were no vaccinations during the civil war. When I visited, Mum & the other members of the ground team, we had a photo outside a school. (photo - page 20) A friend and I set out to find the school, and we got summoned to the headmaster's office! We ended up having photos with some of the kids and photos with the teachers! We are going to ask if we can help them repaint the school. We will see what happens.

I send my love to you all at home. I always miss you, but am very grateful to you all too, for supporting me in various ways, and enabling me to be here.

Praying people - please pray for good healing of wounds. For resilience for some of the team who are working many hours at the moment. For the new crew who have recently arrived that are just settling into this ship community. That we will care for our patients well, and they will be healed emotionally and spiritually, as well as from their physical afflictions.

Thank you! *Rachel*xxx

Notes from the Elders Meeting on 31st October

- News of the fellowship was shared. Prayers were said for all those in need, including their carers and also for those who have been bereaved.
- A mobile phone is now available. The contract for the landline has been cancelled.
- Liz and Bruce have received training to use a "Digibox", to produce hymn tunes instead of the organ. Carol is happy to have this used for one service a month.
- *Explore Christianity* cards are to be purchased, in memory of Rev John Bland. The cards will be put in the vestibule.
- There have been difficulties in obtaining a card reader, as the requirements needed to obtain one are very specific and detailed.
- It was proposed that Action for Children should be the recipient of the Christmas Card donations and also the Christmas Day Offertory.
- The trees have been removed but work needs to be done to level the surface. It was decided not to put in new planters for the time being.
- Yevo Valley School have booked their Carol Concert, Anthea will need help and support with this event.
- There is to be a Christmas Day lunch at Grosvenor again this year, supported by the churches in Barnstaple.

Next meeting: Monday 11th December

Events Group

Thank you to all who helped and donated to the Winter Fair.

It was a lovely day, with stalls selling books and puzzles, cards, Christmas decorations, gifts, craft items and stocking fillers. Also some lovely activities for the children, and a wonderful range of delicious refreshments. It was hard work, but thanks to the good attendance from groups associated with the church, church members, friends and family and we raised £1162.17.

What an amazing day! (photos pages 1 & 20)



This means that over the whole year we have raised over £2,250 for church funds. Just as importantly we have enjoyed fun and fellowship together.

We will be taking a break over the winter and will start planning again next spring.

With grateful thanks,

Liz, Elaine and Joy

A Tanzanian wedding

Some of you may remember that Rod and I are friends with the Moshu family who live in Arusha, Tanzania. We had heard that the eldest son, Baraka, was getting married on 23 September, and realised that we could squeeze in a trip, thinking that it might be the last time we would be able to get out to Tanzania. So, we invited ourselves and Baraka kindly said he would be delighted if we could come. My son, Ali, who is particularly friendly with Baraka had a school holiday in Melbourne so he was able to come as well. We spent the week in a small hotel in the hills overlooking Mount Meru (the lesser-known mountain in Tanzania but still spectacular).

On Thursday 21 September we were invited to the "sending off" of the bride, Salome. She is from the Maasai tribe and so had to leave her family in order to marry Baraka. We were told to arrive at 5pm for a two-hour event. It actually started around 6 and we left at 11pm when it was still in full flow! Essentially lots of noise and dancing, bottles of pop and, eventually, traditional Tanzanian food. All the speaking was in Swahili. Rod and I know about three words of Swahili but Ali is pretty proficient so got the gist of what was going on and could translate much of it for us. Salome's parents literally handed their daughter over to the Moshu family accompanied by the giving away of many cakes and endless processions of people offering gifts and money. Towards the end, Baraka was summoned. He danced in wearing Maasai wedding clothes along with half a dozen friends, including Ali, who was dressed as a Maasai warrior and who "bounced" in with the others. Salome's father thought it was hysterical seeing a mzungu ("white man") in Maasai dress! After all the dramatics we were invited to eat along with around 450 other guests; it was some party!

Two days later we attended the wedding itself in a church in Arusha. We were there on time but now we understand African timings which are fluid to say the least! Once it got going (some 90 minutes behind schedule!), it was a lovely wedding and we got the gist even though it was in Swahili again. Ali was asked by the minister to speak to the couple. He went forward and reminded Baraka and Salome that they were not facing married life alone and, if they ever needed help, they just had to ask. Good advice I thought. We then moved on to a big marquee and the reception followed the same lines as the sending off except, this time, the emphasis was on the couple and Baraka's parents. All were showered with gifts and money and, even a cooked goat (still looking like a goat!) from which they fed each other and then it was offered to all. This was not the highlight for me, a vegetarian! In fact, a few days before, I had met the cow that was then slaughtered for the feast. This all felt slightly biblical to me but was clearly a big part of the occasion.

We came home a week later feeling tired from all the excitement and partying but pleased that we had gone. There is so much I could tell you about the trip but that will wait for another time!

(photo - page 20)

Paula Littlewood

Many thanks to all who contributed to the Harvest Festival donations for the Northern Devon Foodbank.

Food donations totaled 125.85 Kgs, plus donations of money amounted £62.50



Marilyn



SOUND IT OUT
2024

"Singing for Memory"
10am -12 noon
Mon 8th & 22nd January
Mon 12th & 26th February




Coffee, Cake and Chat together
with Singing and Music too!
NO musical talent required.


Sound It Out is a fortnightly social and singing group aimed at people living with memory loss and their carers or a friend and for those who may be socially isolated.
2nd & 4th Mondays from 10 – 12 noon
at Christ Church, Bear St
Come and see if it's for you!

For more information about SIO, speak to Eff, Elaine, Marilyn or Anthea at Christ Church or email Sally – sally.blackmore@mha.org.uk

CHRISTMAS CONCERT

COME ALONG AND JOIN IN
WITH CAROLS
& CHRISTMAS MUSIC
WITH THE BARNSTAPLE
COMMUNITY CHOIR
& ORCHESTRA

AT CHRIST CHURCH,
BEAR STREET
BARNSTAPLE
ON THURSDAY 7TH
DECEMBER
FROM 7.00PM
FREE ENTRY
REFRESHMENTS



During the morning of the Winter Fair, the defibrillator (public access AED) was taken to support an incident at the opticians. We give thanks that the defibrillator did not need to be activated. My personal thanks to everyone for their support during the episode.
I give reassurance that the defibrillator was used in accordance with the protocols of The Circuit (national database for public access AEDs).

Maureen

Offertory

An increasing number of people are donating money direct to the Church account by standing order. Many thanks to all of you.

If you are a tax payer and would like the church to claim back the tax on your giving or if you change your address or other details, please contact Janet Marshall or speak to a serving elder.

Cash offerings can be made at Christ Church on a Sunday morning. Gift Aid envelopes are also there if you wish to use one. Thank you,

Kathy



OUR MISSION STATEMENT

**Christ Church seeks to express
the love of Christ for everyone.**

**All at Christ Church Barnstaple are committed to
the following Safeguarding Principles:**

- * the care and nurture of, and respectful pastoral ministry with, all children, young people and all adults.
- * the safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and adults when they are vulnerable.
- * the establishing of safe, caring communities which provide a loving environment where there is informed vigilance as to the dangers of abuse.
(Methodist Safeguarding Guidelines, online: www.methodist.org.uk)

*If you are visiting Christ Church today we extend a warm welcome.
Please take a Messenger home with our good wishes.*

Christ Church Minister

Revd Don Macalister

01271 345313

dasmacalister@icloud.com

Elders

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Please send us articles, poems, book reviews, and photos of Church events

Website

www.christ-church-barnstaple.org.uk



**The
Winter Fair**



Decorating gingerbread figures



Shirley on the Christmas Gift Stall



**Rachel & Gill Greenland
in Siiera Leone 20 years ago**



**Paula & Rod Littlewood in Tanzania
for the Moshia Family Wedding**

Happy retirement Revd Don! *"For I know the plans I have for you....." Jeremiah 29:11*